

In the Specification:

On page 6, in the paragraph beginning six lines from the bottom, please amend as follows:

*(P1)* FIGS. [5a-b] 5a-c show [two] three cross sections of configurations of the blade with a film of plastic material on the concave and convex sides, respectively.

In the paragraph starting on page 25 and continuing to page 26, please amend as follows:

*(P2)* When the blade 16 is released after taking the measurement, the spring 32 rotates the reel 14 with respect to the housing assembly 12 in a blade-winding direction to wind the blade 16 around the reel 14. A relatively short free end portion of the blade 16 has a film 158 of plastic material adhered to the concave and/or to the convex side thereof (FIG. 11) to protect the blade 16 while the same is out of the housing assembly 12 and while the blade 16 is being retracted under the spring force of the spring 32 back into the housing assembly 12. Though the film 158 may be clear to permit reading of measuring indicia beneath the film, it may also be opaque, particularly in the case where it is on the convex side of the blade 16 as shown in Figure 5b. Moreover, if an opaque film 158 is used on the concave side of the blade, it may itself contain the measuring indicia 159 for that portion of the blade, so that even if the film obscures printed indicia on the blade 16, the device can still be readily used. Preferably the film 158 is made of polyurethane and is adhered to the blade (i.e., over the paint layer), or, in the case that the blade includes a protective plastic coating 17, to the coating 17, by an acrylic adhesive. Adhesive may not be necessary if the plastic coating is made of

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the same material as the film, since the two components can chemically bond, for example under heat treatment, obviating the need for adhesive. It is also contemplated to use Mylar® or Nylon® to construct the film. The film 158 has a thickness dimension that is larger than the thickness dimension of the thin plastic coating 17, if coating 17 is provided. The film 158 preferably has a thickness within the range of approximately 0.006 inches to approximately 0.014 inches. It is within the scope of the invention to apply this film to the blade of any known tape rule assembly.

In the second full paragraph of page 27, please amend as follows:

*b7*

There are several possibilities for the protective film 158 that remain within the scope of the present invention. For example, the film 158 may cover only a portion of the width of the blade 16. A range of between about 25% to about 100% may be sufficient to provide an increase in the blade life while reducing the amount of material necessary to provide the film. Most preferably, however, about 100% of the blade width is covered. In addition, the film, illustrated in Fig. 5c as film 165, [158] may include a plurality of sub-layers 166. The sub-layers may be formed into the film prior to attachment to the blade 16, or may alternately be individually attached to the blade in an iterative process. Also, the film 158, 165 may include at least one reinforcing member; such as, wherein the reinforcing member is a fiber 168 as in Fig. 5b.